NP

Gilbert, of Colchester;

AN

ELIZABETHAN MAGNETIZER.

BY

BRO. SILVANUS P. THOMPSON, D.Sc., B.A.

MAGNETIZER.

Read at a Meeting of the Sette holden at Limmer's Hotel, on Friday, the 4th of July, 1890.

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No. XXII.

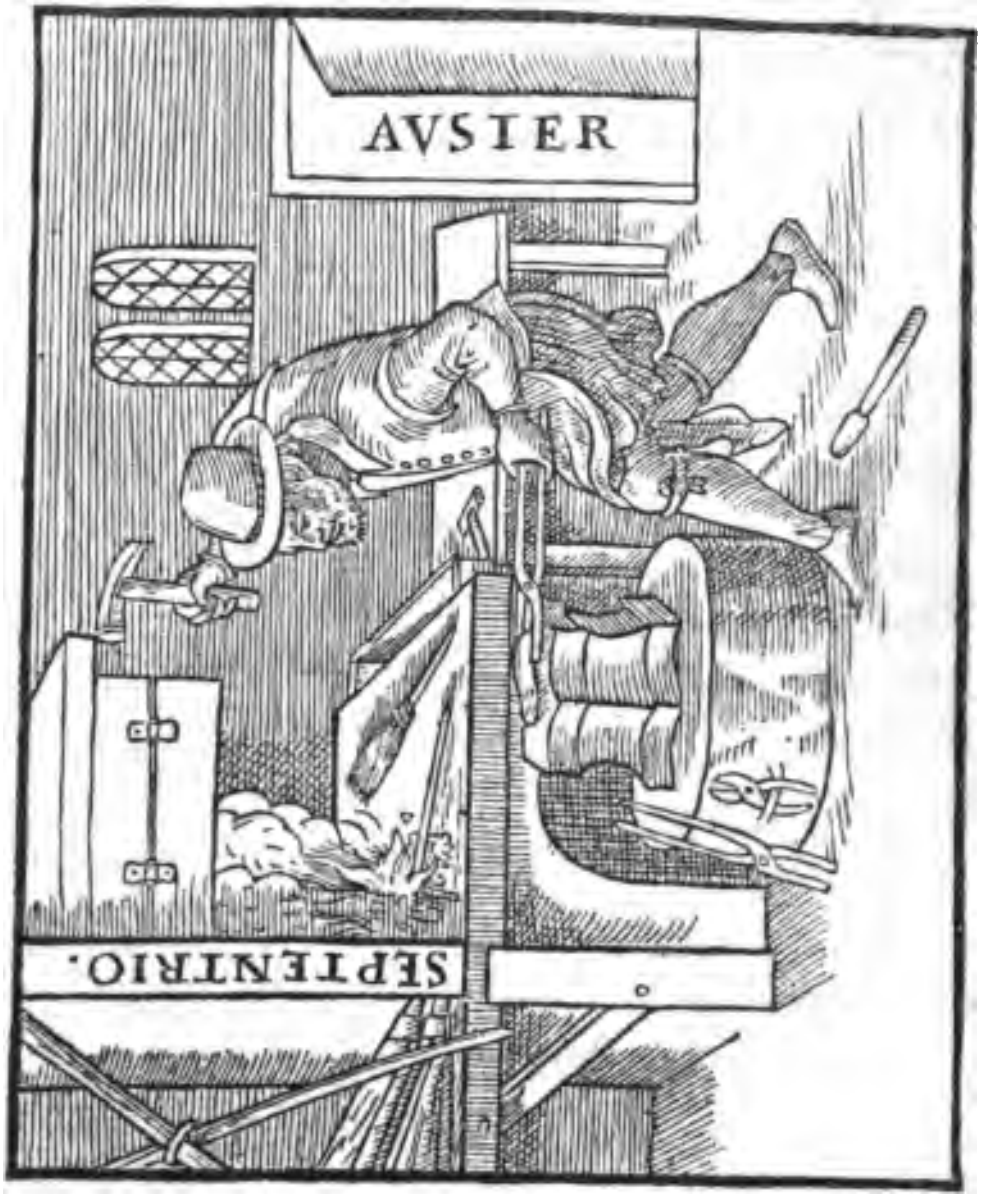
GILBERT, OF COLCHESTER.

"Gilbert shall live till loadstones cease to draw,
Or British fleets the boundless ocean awe."

DRYDEN.

"*Mahomet's Tombe* at *Mecha*, is said strangely to *hang* up, attracted by some invisible *Loadstone*, but the memory of this *Doctor* will never fall to the ground, which his incomparable Book, 'De Magnete,' will *support* to Eternity."

FULLER'S "Worthies."


AVSTER
SEPTENTRIO.

GILBERT, OF COLCHESTER.

WILLIAM GILBERT, or Gilberd, of Colchester, (born 1540, died 1603) holds amongst Elizabethan worthies a rank in the eyes of electricians second to none of his famous contemporaries. In an age of empiricism and ignorance he rescued the study of the magnet from the atmosphere of occult mysticism with which it was surrounded, and placed it for ever on a scientific basis. He founded the theory of the mariner's compass by his brilliant discovery of the magnetism of the globe. Whilst the fantastic philosophies of the schoolmen still

prevailed, he calmly worked out the inductive method of reasoning from the known to the unknown, trying all his arguments by the touchstone of experiment. Nor is even this his greatest achievement. He stands forth preeminent as the founder of the science of electricity; the father, therefore, of all that host of inventions which are the crown of the scientific progress of the nineteenth century. His great work, "De Magnete," published in 1600, after many years of patient laborious and costly research, drew the attention of all the learned men of Europe, and won for him an undying fame.

"*I extremely admire and envy the author of 'De Magnete.' I think him worthy of the greatest praise for the many new and true observations which he has made.*"

said Galileo the famous astronomer.

"*Gilbert shall live, till loadstones cease to draw,*
Or British fleets the boundless ocean awe,"

sang Dryden, in his Epistle to Dr. Charlton.

Old Fuller, in enumerating the worthies who have adorned the county of Essex quaintly wrote of him as follows:—

"*Mahomet's Tombe* at *Mecha*, is said strangely to *hang* up, attracted by some invisible *Loadstone*, but the memory of this *Doctor* will never fall to the ground, which his incomparable Book, 'De Magnete', will *support* to Eternity."

What manner of man this was, and why he was held worthy of honours so unique, it is our present task to set forth.

Gilbert was the son of the recorder of Colchester Hierom Gilberd; and from his use of

the appellation "Colcestrensis" on the title of his book, it is clear that he was proud of the old city where he was born, and where he died. The Gilberts were an old Suffolk family, but Hierom Gilberd had settled in Colchester in 1528. His family consisted of five sons, the eldest of whom was the famous Doctor. The Gilbert family still exists, scattered chiefly over the county of Norfolk.

Of his boyhood little or nothing is known; indeed it is surprising that there is little to chronicle about so great a man beyond the dates of a few salient events in his career. No Boswell dogged his steps, to note down his words of wisdom. No biographer hunted down his correspondence. His scientific works, and the impulse they gave to the spirit of research are his monument;—a monument more enduring than brass.

In May 1558, being then 18 years old,

he matriculated at St. John's College, Cambridge, at which University he remained for eleven years. At the end of 1560 he proceeded to his bachelor's degree, and on March 21st, 1561 he was admitted as a fellow on Symson's Foundation. In 1564 he "commenced" M.A. For the two following years he was mathematical examiner in his College, and appears to have turned his attention to medicine; for on May 13th 1569 he was admitted M.D., and on Dec. 29th of the same year was elected to a Senior Fellowship. After this he left England to travel in foreign countries. His precise course of travel is unknown; but he made the acquaintance of many persons of distinction in the great historic universities, with some of whom he is known to have been subsequently in correspondence. Passages in his published works show him to have resided in Mantua,

Venice, and other cities, and his knowledge of geography was very considerable. He returned to England in 1573 and was at once made a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians. Henceforth his residence was in London, where he took up a regular medical practice. On Nov. 25th 1577 was granted to him the coat of arms which is figured at the back of the title-page of his book, and was subsequently emblazoned in carved stone upon his tomb. He rapidly rose in professional distinction. From 1581 till 1590 he was Censor of the Royal College of Physicians. He was its Treasurer from 1587 to 1591 and again from 1597 to 1599. In 1600 he was made President, an honour which he did not long retain, as he died on Nov. 3rd 1603, aged 63 years. He was never married, but the family name was carried down to posterity by his brothers, one of whom, by a

curious circumstance also named William, was a proctor in the Court of Arches.

It is stated that Gilbert expended upon his magnetic researches no less considerable a sum than five thousand pounds. His experiments with loadstones lasted for many years, and he possessed a remarkable collection of them. He also had many instruments, some of which are figured in his book. He himself devised some novel forms of instruments for navigation two of which are described in a subsequent work, "The Theoriques of the Seuen Planets," by Thomas Blundeville. His charts, globes, magnets, instruments, and manuscripts he bequeathed, together with his books to the possession of the Royal College of Physicians.

To estimate the magnitude of his achievements in science it is requisite briefly to review the state of knowledge with respect to magne-

tism and electricity before the appearance of his epoch-making work.

The property of the loadstone to attract pieces of iron or other loadstones was a fact known to antiquity, and explained as usual by the ascription of magical or occult powers. Pliny mentions that a ring of iron hung to a loadstone can attract a second ring, and the second a third until a chain of rings hangs from the stone; an experiment also described in hexameters by Lucretius in the *De Rerum Natura*. No other fact of importance appears to have been known concerning the magnet, until about the eleventh century, when the directive power of the loadstone became known. This discovery, so important in the history of navigation, is variously attributed to the Chinese, the Arabians, and to an Italian named Goia who lived at Amalfi in the thirteenth century.

The probability is that Goia devised the method of supporting the magnetic needle on a pivot, the earlier ones having been either floated on wood in a basin of water or else suspended by a thin thread. Gilbert himself states that the mariner's compass was first brought to Italy from China by the famous traveller Marco Polo. On the other hand in the Icelandic Chronicle of Are Frode, which was written about the end of the eleventh century, there is a succinct reference to the use of the loadstone for directing the seaman. Further, Cardinal de Vitri, who wrote a history of Jerusalem about the year 1200, also describes the magnetized needle as indispensable in navigation. An obscure author Peter Peregrinus, whose existence was for long considered mythical, and who wrote a letter upon magnetism reputed to be of a date at the end of the thirteenth century, describes the fact

that the north-pointing end or region of one loadstone will attract the south-pointing end or region of another loadstone. Peregrinus's letter was certainly published as a small book of 43 pagés, small quarto, at Augsburg in 1558. Two other magnetic facts of cardinal importance had also been observed. On the 14th of September 1492, Columbus, when about 200 leagues west of the European shores, noticed for the first time the variation of the compass from the true north. According to Gilbert the same discovery was made in 1498 by Sebastian Cabot. It was not, however, until the middle of the sixteenth century that accurate measurements were made of the amount of the variation in Europe. Robert Norman, a compass maker in Limehouse, found that the compass pointed 11° 15′ to the east of the true north. William Borough, comptroller of the royal navy,

in 1580 found the variation to be 11° 19′. The second important fact was the tendency of the needle to dip. This was discovered by Norman in 1576, and the same fact was independently observed in 1544 by Hartmann of Nürnberg. Norman indeed constructed a dipping needle, by the aid of which he ascertained the angle of dip at London to be 71° 50′ Yet another isolated fact was discovered in 1590 by a surgeon of Rimini named Julius Cæsar, namely that a vertical bar of iron, used as a support on the top of the tower of the church of St. Augustine had of itself acquired magnetic properties.

Of magnetic literature prior to Gilbert there was very little; at least of a reliable sort. The most important work was that of John Baptista Porta, the inventor of the magic lantern, published in 1558, on natural magic. The seventh

chapter of this work is devoted to the magnet and the tricks which may be played by its means. Porta mentions, for the purpose of refuting them, some of the mediæval fables about magnets, including a story handed down from Plutarch and Ptolemy that garlic rubbed over a magnet destroys its power, unless, according to Ruelius, it be restored by anointing it with the blood of a he-goat. Another fable, that a magnet is powerless in the presence of a diamond, is also condemned by Porta. The latest work on magnetism prior to the appearance of Gilbert's treatise was a small pamphlet which appeared in 1597 entitled "The Navigator's Supply," by William Barlowe, which gave for the use of seamen many facts about the variation of the compass at different seaports, and about the amount of the dip of the needle in different parts of the earth.

All these earlier publications dealing with magnetic subjects, consisted, as will have been noticed, in the announcement of isolated facts and properties, rather than in any systematic investigation or consistent explanation. The significance of the facts was not seen; and they were in many cases mixed up with exaggeration and myth. Gilbert himself enumerates sundry of them in order to show how empty and ridiculous were the current explanations of the pointing of the compass. Serapio Mauritanus and others reported that there were in the Indies magnetic mountains which would attract passing ships and draw the iron nails out of them. Paracelsus and Cardan considered the magnet to be governed by some virtue proceeding from the constellation of the Great Bear; and after the discovery that the needle did not point truly northward Cardan gravely suggested that the

star in the tip of the tail of the Great Bear was itself a magnet. Olaus Magnus, and after him Maurolycus, declared that there was a magnetic island, or loadstone rock in the north sea, toward which the compass turned its apex: Plancius even showed its position on a chart of the globe!

Such was the state of the science when "De Magnete" appeared. The full title of the book, in the folio edition of 1600 is:—

"*Guilielmi Gilberti Colcestrensis, medici Londinensis, De Magnete, magneticisque corporibus et de magno magnete tellure; Physiologia nova, plurimis et argumentis, et experimentis demonstrata. Londini. Excudebat Petrus Short. Anno M D C.*"

A brief analysis of the contents of the book may not be unacceptable. It is divided into

six sections, all except the first being copiously illustrated with simple woodcuts and diagrams. The preface, addressed to the candid reader, opens by announcing that the earth, our common mother, is itself a great magnet; and explaining how, the better to understand the conspicuous forces of the globe, we are to begin by understanding the ordinary or common magnetic bodies and so proceed by experiment to the more abstruse facts. Comparing the study of terrestrial phenomena with celestial, he points out how geometry, ascending from simple fundamental conceptions to those which are more difficult, aids the wit of man to climb above the firmament; and how likewise magnetic study must proceed from the simple to the complex. He discards all arguments drawn from older Greek authors, regarding them as mere verbiage. His aversion from Aristotelian

methods is strongly marked; an aversion which is emphasized in the very first page of his later work (the "De mundo nostro") which he describes as a *Philosophia nova contra Aristotelem.*

Book I. opens with a review of the older writers and their various opinions and vanities, which he scornfully dismisses by remarking that only plebeian philosophers delight themselves in such nonsense; and he names the following as the men who have really added to magnetic knowledge:—Thomas Hariot, Robert Hues, Edward Wright, Abraham Kendall, William Borough, William Barlowe, and Robert Norman, all Englishmen. He then deals with the etymology of the word magnet, and the discovery and geographical distribution of the loadstone. He then enters upon the experimental methods of investigation, using loadstones of various shapes, the properties and mutual actions of

which are carefully observed and recorded. A loadstone, ground down by the lapidary to a spherical shape, furnished him with the means of drawing a magnificent generalization. For he

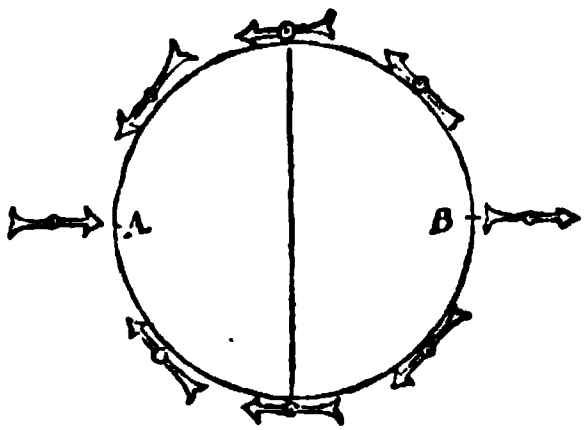


Fig. 1. GILBERT'S TERRELLA.

found that a globular loadstone is in miniature a precise counterpart, magnetically, of the globe of the earth: small compass needles placed near it being directed, and caused to dip, by its magnetic forces precisely as our mariners' compasses are affected by the earth. Such a globular mag-

net he styled a *Terrella.* In one woodcut, here reproduced in facsimile (Fig. 1), compass needles are shown pointing variously over

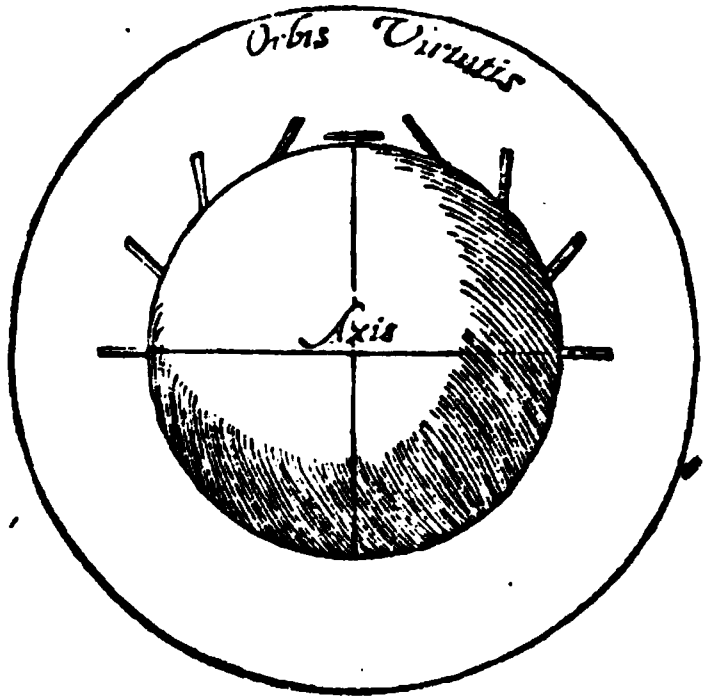


Fig. 2. NEEDLES DIPPING TO THE TERRELLA.

divers regions of the terrella. In another (Fig. 2), the terrella is shown inclosed within a certain orbit of magnetic virtue, as by a surrounding atmosphere. In further experiments load-

stones were cut into two parts, the parts being floated on water in little vessels to observe their mutual attractions and repulsions. All experiments which Gilbert considered as being original he claimed as his own by affixing an asterisk, large or small according to the importance of the matter, in the margin of the text. The attraction of the loadstone for iron was examined, and the properties of iron compared with those of other metals; many a passing hit at the absurdities of astrologers and alchemists being interposed. He discovered that iron which has not been touched by any magnet can nevertheless act magnetically. Toward the close of Book I. he discusses, only to dismiss with scorn, the alleged medicinal powers of the magnet, beginning with its use as prescribed by Dioscorides and Galen, as a purge for melancholy, and ending with Paracelsus, who

recommended poultices containing powdered loadstones. Short shrift would our modern magneto-pathic quacks have got, with their magnetic belts and magnetic rings, at the hands of the outspoken Doctor! The observations with the Terrella are continued in Book II. and Book III., ending with some experiments made to illustrate observations of the compass in distant lands which had been communicated to him by Sir Francis Drake—experiments which fully confirmed his theory—and the results of which he sums up by saying that magnetic bodies behave towards the globe of the earth precisely as his magnets behave toward the terrella; the laws of their action being alike. Amongst other matters which helped him to this conclusion was his discovery that if a rod of iron is hammered whilst lying in a north-and-south position it becomes magnetized by the

influence of the earth's magnetism. This observation is illustrated by a quaint woodcut, which is reproduced on a smaller scale as the frontispiece of this opusculum. Books IV. and V. go into some geographical and astronomical matters; being intended chiefly as a contribution to the nautical applications of his studies. He describes sundry instruments, one of them, for ascertaining the variation of the compass in different regions being that shown in the accompanying reduced woodcut (Fig. 3). Several others are depicted in his book. He particularly discusses the effects of masses of iron ore in mountains and continents in producing local perturbations or variations of the compass; a matter which has quite lately received fresh attention from the recent magnetic surveys of Professors Rücker and Thorpe in which they have measured the perturbing effects of moun-

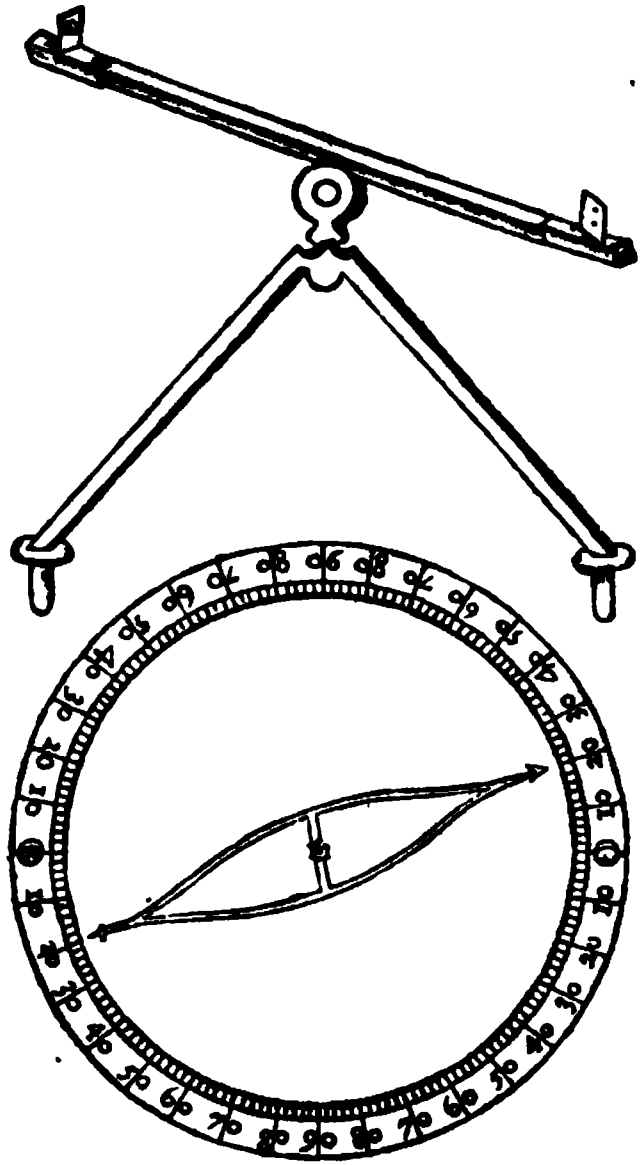


Fig. 3. GILBERT'S INSTRUMENT FOR OBSERVING THE VARIATION OF THE COMPASS.

tain chains such as the Malvern Hills, and have even been led to discover the existence of underground mountains. Book VI. is of a more speculative character, dealing with magnetic motions and cosmical systems; the main point of interest in it being its frank acceptance of the astronomical doctrines of Copernicus.

These contributions to purely magnetic knowledge were of great importance: but far transcending them in interest is a short digression interpolated in the second Book. This is the famous Chapter on Electricity which laid the foundation of that science. Prior to Gilbert's time the only known electrical facts were two isolated observations of pre-historic date. The mineral amber, or ἠλέκτρον, then of great rarity and regarded as a gem, was known to acquire, when rubbed, the magical property of attracting straws and other light objects. A similar pro-

perty had been recognized to exist in jet. Amber was a substance about which there was something uncanny. It was clear like glass, when of good quality, but was often found to contain flies and other insects inclosed within itself; "shining," says Gilbert, "in eternal sepulchres." Much had the ancients, including Theophrastus and Pliny written about it and the magical properties which it exhibited after being rubbed. This peculiar phenomenon was submitted to examination by Gilbert with an industry and experimental sagacity thoroughly characteristic of the man. He devised for facilitating the observation of feeble attractions a simple instrument, consisting of a light stiff arm of metal (see Fig. 4), resembling in shape a compass needle, pivotted like a compass upon a pin. This apparatus, termed by him a *versorium*, constituted the electroscope by the aid of which he

disproved the idea that the alleged magical property was possessed only by amber or by jet. He poured out the vials of his wrath upon the empty-headed and inert philosophers who merely copy from one another and invent high sounding Greek words wherewith to cloak their

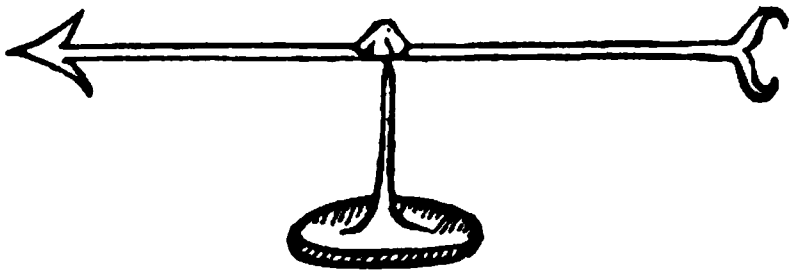


Fig. 4. GILBERT'S VERSORIUM, OR ELECTROSCOPE.

ignorance. "For not only do amber and jet, as they say, draw light bodies but diamond, sapphire, carbuncle, cat's eye, opal, amethyst, vincentina and bristolla (an English gem or spar) beryl and rock crystal do the same." And he went on enumerating a host of other substances possessing similar powers, following up the true

gems with false gems made from paste, glass of antimony, slags, belemnites, sulphur, mastic, hard wax, sealing wax variously coloured, resin and arsenic, and also, but less powerfully and only in dry weather, rock-salt, obsidian, and rock-alum. All these substances, because they resembled amber, he termed *electrics;* whilst he gave the name of *anelectrics* to another class of substances which showed no such power, and which included the following :—emerald, agate, carnelian, pearls, jasper, alabaster, porphyry, coral, marble, flint, haematite, emery, bone, ivory, ebony and other hard woods, cedar, gold, copper, iron and the other metals, and lastly the loadstone. The substance which above all others possesses the magnetic property of attracting iron shows no trace of electric action when rubbed in the hand. From the terms assigned by Gilbert the word *electricitas* (electricity) came into use to

denote the unseen agent operating in these actions. Gilbert further showed that the power of attraction exercised by the electric when rubbed was not limited to mere straws or chaff, but that all metals and woods, and also stones and earths were attracted. He even found that liquids, oil and water were drawn by the electric force. He ascertained that moisture exercises a prejudicial effect on electrical experiments. He observed that electrical effects can be screened off, in a way that magnetic effects cannot, by the interposition of a sheet of metal, or even by a piece of paper. He further ascertained the screening effect of a ring of flames. His observations stop short all too soon, leaving the infant science truly in a state of infancy. Nevertheless he was the pioneer whose first steps showed the path to be later trodden by Robert Boyle, by Francis Haukesbee, by Sir

Isaac Newton, and by Benjamin Franklin; and therefore is beyond dispute the father of electric science.

It remains to be told how Gilbert's work was received. Strange to say, it fell somewhat flat. The world was hardly prepared to accept a sober treatise based on simple facts in place of the wild and speculative treatises which had hitherto passed as philosophic. Scaliger in one of his epistles (ad Casaubon, 1604) speaks of a certain Englishman who three years previously had brought out a book on the magnet which was nothing worthy of the expectation which it had excited. Bacon, though he reproduced as his own, in his "Opuscula Philosophica" whole paragraphs almost verbatim from Gilbert, sneered at him in his "De Augmentis" as the man who had made a whole philosophy out of the observations of a loadstone; and in another

place refers to "De Magnete" as a "painfull and experimentall work." In another place in the "Novum Organon" he accuses Gilbert of having created so many fables about the electric operation; which, he adds is nothing else than the appetite of the body excited by gentle friction! Others there were indeed who better appreciated the magnitude of Gilbert's work. Galileo, as we have seen, spoke of him as of enviable greatness. Kepler warmly welcomed the new doctrine of the earth's magnetism, and devoted a long chapter in his treatise on Astronomy to the exposition of Gilbert's views. Barlowe, the learned Archdeacon of Salisbury, whose "Magneticall Aduertisements" was published in 1618, speaks of "De Magnete" as "the very true fountaine of all magneticall knowledge." Dr. Marke Ridley, who in 1613 published "A Short Treatise of Magneticall

Bodies and Motions" speaks of Gilbert's labours as "the greatest and best in Magneticall Philosophie." Sir Kenelm Digby classed Gilbert along with Harvey, the discoverer of the circulation of the blood, as men by whose means our nation may claim, even in this latter age, a crown for solid philosophical learning.

Gilbert further laid the foundations of future scientific progress by founding a sort of society or college which met monthly at his house in Peter's Hill, Knight Rider Street, for the discussion of philosophical subjects, and which, though it fell into abeyance at his death, must be regarded as the precursor of the Royal Society.

He did not live to add, as he proposed, an appendix of six or eight sheets to "De Magnete;" no such addition appearing in either of the German editions published at Stettin in 1628

and 1633 respectively. He left behind him, however, the manuscript of another work of lesser merit, which was posthumously published in 1651 by the famous printing house of Elzevir, entitled "De Mundo nostro Sublunari Philosophia Nova." It is chiefly a meteorological and cosmical treatise, remarkable indeed for one speculative point, namely a suggestion that the reason why the moon always presents the same face towards the earth is because the moon, like the earth, is magnetic.

His fame as physician and physicist won him the favour of Queen Elizabeth by whom in February 1601 he was appointed chief physician. He even received from her at her death an annual pension; and was continued as chief physician to James I., an honour which he only enjoyed for seven months, as he died on Nov. 30th, 1603.

The partial oblivion into which Gilbert's fame has been allowed to fall is due probably mainly to the loss of all personal relics of him. With the exception of a single doubtful inscription "*ex dono auctoris*" in a single copy of "De Magnete," not a line of his handwriting is known to exist, unless his hand wrote the signature "*Ye President and Societie*" at the end of a petition preserved amongst the manuscripts in the British Museum, addressed by the Royal College of Physicians in 1596 to the Lords of the Privy Council, complaining of the exactions of the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of London. It is pretty certain that the MS. copy "De Mundo Nostro," in Latin in the British Museum is not in the author's handwriting; for in the Elzevir print there is a note which states that the author's original manuscript was partly in English. It is sad to relate that the manuscripts,

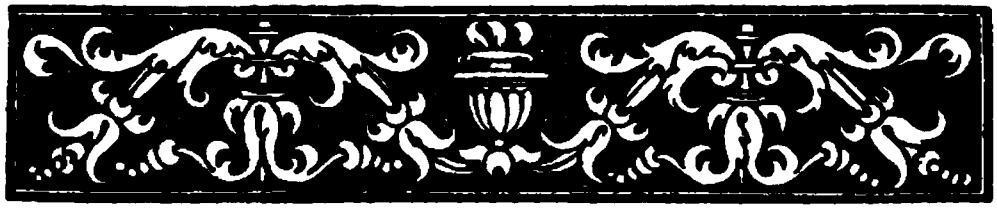
maps, letters, magnets and minerals which he bequeathed to the Royal College of Physicians, all perished in the Great Fire in 1666. Almost equally sad is it, that his portrait, painted in oils, which he himself presented to the Schools' Gallery of the University of Oxford has disappeared: it is believed to have been destroyed as rubbish forty years ago. Only a poor engraving, made in 1796, and not true to the original picture in several details, remains to witness to the scholarly features of the great Doctor.

His residence in Colchester, a quaint old house in Holy Trinity Street, called Tymperley's, still stands; and his tomb in the church of Holy Trinity still proclaims over his ashes the virtues which he practised whilst living. But his memorial remains in his magnetic and electrical discoveries. His reputation is en-

shrined in the science which he founded—"shining in an eternal sepulchre."

He takes his place amongst the great men of a great age, not unworthily, as one of those who, not by song in his case but by science, truly

"fill
The spacious times of great Elizabeth
With sounds that echo still."



In re Guilielmi Gilberti, Colcestrensis.

ON THE OCCASION OF THE READING OF THIS PAPER THERE WERE EXHIBITED BY THE AUTHOR THE FOLLOWING WORKS.

1. Guilielmi Gilberti Colcestrensis, medici Londinensis, de magnete, magneticisque corporibus, et de magno magnete tellure; Physiologia nova, plurimis et argumentis, et experimentis demonstrata. Londini. Excudebat Petrus Short. Anno M D C. (Folio, pp. 240, *The original edition.*)
2. Tractatus sive Physiologia nova De Magnete, magneticisque corporibus et magno mag-

nete tellure Sex libris comprehensus â Guilielmo Gilberto Colcestrensi, medico Londinensi. Omnia nunc recognita & emendatius quam ante in lucem edita, aucta & figuris illustrata operâ & studio Wolfgangi Lochmans, I.U.D. & Mathemati. Excusus Sedini typis Götzianis Sumptibus Joh. Hallervordij. Anno M.DC.XXVIII. (4to., pp. 232, with etched Title-page and plates, and an Index. First edition published abroad.)

3. Tractatus, sive Physiologia Nova De Magnete, Magneticisq; corporibus & magno Magnete tellure, sex libris comprehensus, a Guilielmo Gilberto Colcestrensi, Medico Londinensi. In quibus ea, quæ ad hanc materiam spectant, plurimis & Argumentis & experimentis exactissime absolutissimeq; tractantur & explicantur. Omnia nunc diligenter recog-

nita, & emendatius quam ante in lucem edita, aucta & figuris illustrata, opera & studio D. Wolfgangi Lochmans, I.U.D. & Mathematici. Sedini, Typis Gotzianis. Anno M.DC.XXXIII. (4to., pp. 232, with etched plates inserted, and Index.)

4. Guilielmi Gilberti Colcestrensis, Medici Regii, De Mundo nostro Sublunari Philosophia Nova. Opus posthumum, Ab Authoris fratre collectum pridem et dispositum, nunc Ex duobus MSS. codicibus editum. Ex Museio viri perillustris Guilielmi Boswelli Equitis aurati &c. et Oratoris apud Fœderatos Belgas Angli. Amstelodami. Apud Ludovicum Elzevirium. CIↃ IↃ CLI. (4to. pp. 316, with Index; the rare posthumous work on Meteorology.)

5. The Theoriques of the ſeuen Planets, shew-

ing all their diuerse motions, and all other Accidents, called Passions, thereunto belonging. Now more plainly set forth in our mother tongue by M. Blundeuile, than euer they haue been heretofore in any other tongue whatsoeuer, and that with such pleasant demonstratiue figures, as euery man that hath any skill in Arithmeticke, may easily vnderstand the same. A Booke most necessarie for all Gentlemen that are desirous to be skilfull in Astronomie and for all Pilots and Sea-men, or any others that loue to serue the Prince on the Sea, or by the Sea to travail into forraine Countries. . . . There is also hereto added, The making, description, and vse, of two most ingenious and necessarie Instruments for Sea-men, to find out thereby the latitude of any Place vpon the Sea or

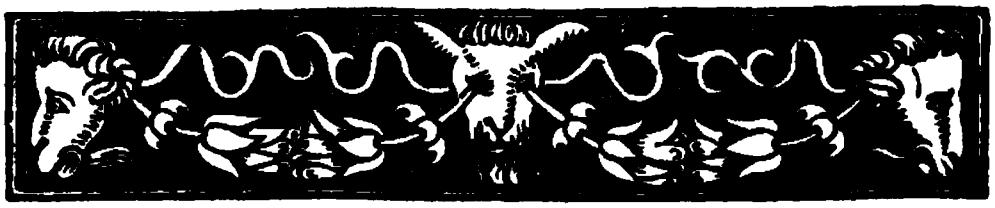
Land, in the darkest night that is, without the helpe of Sunne, Moone, or Starres. First inuented by M. Doctor Gilbert, a most excellent Philosopher, and one of the ordinarie Physicians to her Maiestie: and now here plainely set downe in our mother tongue by Master Blundeuile. London. Printed by Adam Islip. 1602. (12mo. pp. 292, with A short Appendix annexed to the former Treatise by Edward Wright, at the motion of the right Worshipfull M. Doctor Gilbert.)

6. A copy (formerly in the possession of Descartes) of the Dialogus De Systemate Mundi of Galileo Galilaei, containing numerous references to Dr. Gilbert's work in magnetism. (Elzevir Edition, 1635.)

7. A copy of the Epitome Astronomiæ Copernicanæ of Johannes Kepler, in the fourth

book of which Gilbert's theory that the earth itself is a great magnet is accepted and propounded. (Frankfort, 1635.)

Other early works on Magnetism were exhibited by Bro. Conrad W. Cooke and by Latimer Clark, Esq., F.R.S.



O. V.

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1. B. Q.

A Biographical and Bibliographical Fragment. 22 Pages. Presented on November the 5th, 1880, by His Oddship C. W. H. WYMAN. 1st Edition limited to 25 copies. (Subsequently enlarged to 50 copies.)

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By the late J. TROTTER BROCKETT, F.S.A., London and Newcastle, author of "Glossary of North Country Words," to which is prefixed a Biographical Sketch of the Author by FREDERICK BLOOMER. (pp. 94.) Presented on July the 7th, 1882, by His Oddship BERNARD QUARITCH. Edition limited to 150 copies

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Nº XXIII. NEGLECTED FRESCOES IN NORTHERN ITALY. BY DOUGLAS HAMILTON GORDON, F.G.S.

Privately Printed Opuscula.

ISSUED TO THE MEMBERS OF THE SETTE OF ODD VOLUMES.

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IN

NORTHERN ITALY.

BY

DOUGLAS HAMILTON GORDON,

REMEMBRANCER

TO YE SETTE OF ODD VOLUMES.

Read at a Meeting of ye Sette holden at Limmer's Hotel, on Friday, December 6th, 1889.

IMPRINTED AT

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MDCCCXC.

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No. 21.

PRESENTED TO

Mr. Walpole

by Douglas H. Fox

NEGLECTED FRESCOES IN NORTHERN ITALY.

YOUR ODDSHIP, BRETHREN, AND GUESTS.

I MUST at once explain that, when speaking of neglected frescoes in Italy, I do not refer to neglect on the part of their custodians—though it is not impossible that such neglect may be incidentally mentioned, but I wish more especially to bring before the Sette a few gems of early Italian Art which are neglected by the British tourist, principally, I believe, because

they are not in any of the recognized and orthodox halting-places on the journey from Milan to Rome and back, such as Florence, Perugia, Bologna, and Venice. I shall not, therefore, weary the Sette with anything like a catalogue of frescoes in the towns I have mentioned, but shall only touch on a few of the works of art enshrined in Italian country towns—nay, frequently even in small villages. There is, moreover, one great charm about works of art in these small places; there is, as a rule, not too much to see; you may find one or two veritable gems, or a series of scenes painted in fresco, but you do not find a gallery crowded with stupendous works of art, to any one of which a day's study ought to be devoted. Such galleries I commend to the diligent traveller who, pencil in hand, industriously ticks off each picture and statue in Baedeker as he or she

wearily plods along, doing his or her honest eight hours work a day, broken only by a hurried *table-d'hôte* lunch.

I ought, however, to remark in passing that even in Florence there are frescoes, known indeed to the initiated, but not visited by οἱ πολλοί —I beg pardon, the tourists. Why, it passes the wit of man to conceive. For instance, there is a monumental work in fresco by Andrea del Castagno in the Ex Convento of S. Apollonia, in the Via S. Gallo, which is practically unknown, while works of far less importance are every winter visited by hundreds. Again, in Milan, the church of S. Maurizio (better known as the Monastero Maggiore) is literally full of frescoes by Luini and by Gaudenzio Ferrari, painted probably about 1530, Luini's work being probably some of his last, but by no means his least beautiful; but for some reason or other

it is not fashionable to go and see these frescoes!

Having already broken my promise not to speak of works in large towns, I will endeavour to deal with the more legitimate subject of my paper, and in doing so, will only remark that I shall mention the various places more in geographical order than in any other way.

Take Piacenza as an instance; fifty years ago, when the English travelled *vetturino*, this was a recognized stopping-place; at all events for the night; but now, why should anyone stop there, when it is an easy day's journey from Milan to Florence? The natural consequence is, that works of art in Piacenza, notably some magnificent frescoes by Pordenone, are utterly passed over and ignored. These frescoes in the church of S. Maria della Campagna are wonderfully fine, painted about 1530; they are as full

of grace and freedom as any works executed in the same medium, while, when Pordenone left sacred subjects and decorated the dome with groups of deities and satyrs, he displayed a wealth of fancy and an exuberance of graceful movement which has but rarely been equalled. Were these works of art in Florence, many pages would probably have been devoted to extolling their beauties. In Piacenza they are practically unknown. The Palazzo Comunale in Piacenza is one of the most splendid architectural creations I have ever seen; coming on it suddenly, as one does, it is simply amazing, and in beauty compares with the Doge's Palace at Venice. Built in the thirteenth century it is truly, as Burckhardt describes it, "one of the earliest instances of a worthy and monumental embodiment, in stone and lime, of the growing spirit of municipal independence."

So little is Piacenza explored by travellers, that on one occasion when I was there, I found an undescribed picture by Antonello da Messina undoubtedly genuine, and signed and dated. I was wandering through a *Seminario* when a so-called Perugino was pointed out; it was undoubtedly spurious, but next to it was this small gem of an "Ecce Homo" by Antonello da Messina, and there I presume it is now, still unnoticed and unknown.

Again, Ferrara and Cremona are towns which would well repay a traveller for a few days' stay, but, so far as I know, visitors are very few and far between, though frequent enough half-a-century ago, *en route* from Bologna to Venice, or from Verona to Genoa. Ferrara is full of interest both historically and artistically, Cremona architecturally and artistically. But why should I speak of these things? Are they not written in

the books of Baedeker and Murray, so that he who chooses not to run through interesting towns may read them? Moreover I do not wish to bore the Sette by posing as a cicerone. I would rather discourse on some of the art treasures which lay concealed in small towns and villages off the beaten track, and which are only to be visited by those who are content to go through Italy quietly and carefully and, I may add, often.

Take Varese, for instance, a common resort for English travellers, and an easy journey by rail from Milan. On the way, by the bye, we pass Legnano, a small village containing one of Luini's finest works. A few miles from Varese is Castiglione d'Olona, a village containing most important frescoes by Masolino; more especially are they interesting as showing, in the more mundane figures, an amount of plasticity and

freedom of draughtsmanship, which is very abnormal at the period at which they were painted. They markedly illustrate a theory I have always ventured strongly to maintain; that the phenomenal rigidity of some of the figures of fourteenth century painters was due, not so much to their inability to paint with more freedom and plasticity, as to the fact that art being at that period almost entirely religious and not decorative, the painters were afraid to depart from the traditional Byzantine type of sacred figures handed down from earlier times. In several of these frescoes this is very curiously exemplified, specially in one, "The Baptism," where the central figure is as rigid as in any mosaic, the angels are less so, while the wholly mundane figures, semi-nude, of those who have been, and are about to be immersed, are so plastic and so freely drawn, as to remind one of Michael Angelo.

Again, I can mention an Italian mountain town, known to some at least among the brethren, Varallo, high up the valleys and close under the massive heights of Monte Rosa—indeed, as the crow flies, only some twenty-five miles from Zermatt. This is about the last place we should look for early works of art, but there they are, and Gaudenzio Ferrari's frescoes in S. Maria della Grazie and on the Sacro Monte proclaim the fact that about 1510 he was at work there, and drawing his inspiration from the beauty of the surrounding scenes.

It is not very far from Varallo to Saronno, a country town about thirteen miles N.W. of Milan, which boasts of having in the Church of the Sanctuario della Beata Virgine, some of the finest frescoes in Northern Italy painted by Gaudenzio Ferrari and by Bernardino Luini, the latter of whom having killed a man in self-

defence, fled to the church for sanctuary, and while there was compelled by the astute monks to work for his living! So says tradition; but whether this story be true or not, Luini has left us here masterpieces of fresco painting, having surpassed even himself in giving a peculiar celestial look to the very lovely heads which he painted so well.

The castle of Malpaga, a few hours' journey from Saronno, and some seven miles from Bergamo, is now practically a farm-house, but it was very far from being so in the middle of the fifteenth century when it was the residence of the famous condottiere Bartolommeo Colleoni, on whom it had been conferred by the Venetian Republic as a reward for his services. The Republic also, after Colleoni's death, honoured him by the erection of the equestrian statue outside SS. Giovanni e Paolo at Venice, pro-

bably as well known as any statue in Europe. Not so his castle of Malpaga, where, about 1450, he entertained King Christian of Denmark in great state, and where about 1530 Romanino painted the great hall and courtyard in fresco with scenes from the visit of the king and other events of Colleoni's life—very quaint and curious they are. There is the arrival of the king, met by Colleoni, with a band of retainers. There is a tournament in honour of the king, giving an exact idea of how the jousts were conducted. Two knights are tilting, one each side of the barrier, and one has been struck on his vizor just in front of the judges' box; squires are busily engaged in the foreground in putting the finishing touches to their masters' toilets, while in the background are seen the ramparts of the castle. A hunting party, with Colleoni and King Christian at the head of it, is the subject

of the next fresco, which in arrangement bears a most ridiculous likeness to Stothard's picture of the Canterbury Pilgrims in the National Gallery. The party is engaged in coursing, hawking, deer-stalking, and, apparently, polite conversation, all at the same time, but judging from the fresco the epoch had not arrived at which ladies honoured the hunting field with their presence. Then comes the banquet in the identical hall, now painted in fresco, then hung with arras. The king sits in solitary state above the triangular saltcellar, his host on his right with his family, but apparently no retainers. The major-domo with his wand of office, ushers in the serving-men with the various dishes, while the decanters, as in a modern hydropathic establishment, are placed on the floor. The next scene is the distribution of liveries by Colleoni to the king's and his own retainers, in honour of a

wrestling match, the liveries being all in red and white, the Colleoni colours. The scene is in the courtyard of the castle, on the walls of which are the Colleoni coat of arms. Now the canting cognizance of the house is peculiar. No doubt our herald will put my remarks into proper heraldic language, and I will therefore only say that it partly consists of a portion of the human body not usually exposed to public view. The last fresco represents the departure of the king accompanied by Colleoni and his retainers. They are passing over the still extant drawbridge of the castle, with colours flying and trumpets braying; and there, so far as the frescoes are concerned, the history of the regal visit ends. The castle itself, however, is well worth seeing, though shorn of most of its former glories, and now reduced to such base uses that the banqueting-hall is for a great portion of the year used

for storing silkworm cocoons! But the old moat, drawbridge, and fabric are very curious, and I should not forget to add that the coats of arms in the courtyard are so defaced that there is no fear of the cognizance of the house of Colleoni shocking the most modest traveller, whether male or female. I have ventured to give a rather more extended account of these frescoes as an instance of the amount of interest to be found in these out-of-the-way places. I cannot, however, inflict many more on the Sette in a short paper, but I should like to call attention to the frescoes in the Villa Masèr, which is some seven or eight miles from Castelfranco, and where Queen Cornaro of Cyprus resided towards the end of her life. The walls of the villa are covered with frescoes by Paolo Veronese in his freest and grandest manner, representing allegorical figures and festive scenes.

Again, at Col' Alto, a small castle near Conegliano in Venetia, are frescoes by Pordenone, painted probably in the early part of the sixteenth century, which display comparative immaturity, and are very different from those I mentioned as being at Piacenza, but still they are works of importance. Col' Alto is built on a small circular hill rising suddenly from the plain of the Piave, and is a most interesting old place. The visitor there in September, will find wine-making going on in the castle courtyard, and will probably be offered a drink of the muddy mixture running slowly from the great tun in which a dozen *contadini* are laboriously trampling on the grapes. I may also add that he will probably refuse the offer. The hamlet of Susignana at the foot of the hill, boasts of a splendid altar-piece by Pordenone in its church.

I must not forget to mention a picture by Giorgione at Castelfranco in Venetia, if only to express my humble concurrence with a remark made to me the other day, by a well-known artist, that it is one of the finest pictures in the world. It is a Madonna and Child, with S. Francis and S. Liberale, and was painted probably about 1506.

Castelfranco is a town but rarely reached by the ordinary traveller to Venice, but it is well worthy of a visit, if only to see this single work. It is one of those half pathetic, wholly interesting records of what Venice once was. St. Mark's Lion still keeps guard over the old gateway; but the walls of the old town, which dates from 1169, are ruinous, and the city within them looks lifeless and deserted. The newer town, outside the old walls, is the ordinary Italian country town. Many of the houses bear traces of fresco, now rapidly crumbling to ruins, re-

minding us of Bassano and the neighbouring villages.

At Castelfranco, in the beginning of the sixteenth century, lived Tuzio Costanzo, one of those professional soldiers who with their adherents did so much to carve out the history of those times. His son, Matteo, followed in his father's footsteps, and became a condottiere in the service of the Venetian republic. But he died quite young at Ravenna, in 1504, and his father caused this altar-piece to be painted by Giorgione as a votive offering in memory of his son.

Putting aside the sacred figures in the picture, beautiful as they are, the background alone forms what is probably the most exquisite piece of landscape ever painted by Giorgione—a lovely Italian spring morning, with all its dewy freshness. On the left is a square tower: on the right a ruined Roman temple; and, between

them, an airy, joyous landscape, sloping down to the shore of a placid lake—painted evidently by a man who knew well the plains of Venetia and appreciated to the full their beauty. The beautiful Madonna is supposed to be the portrait of her whom Giorgione addressed in the lines which he is said to have written on the back of the panel by way of signature, now obliterated,—

Cara Cecilia,
Vieni t' affretta;
Il tuo t' aspetta
Giorgio. . . . . .

The S. Liberale of the Castelfranco picture has been by some supposed to be the portrait of Giorgione himself; by others, that of Matteo Costanzo. The latter conjecture seems to be the more accurate. One reason for so thinking is, that the effigy of Costanzo in the burial-ground of Castelfranco closely follows the armour re-

presented in Giorgione's picture. This point, however, can be readily investigated by those who choose to do so, the original study for the S. Liberale being in the National Gallery.

I have only been able to mention a few of the art treasures which are to be found in Northern Italy, and I fear I have wearied the Sette with what is not much better than a catalogue; but what I wish to demonstrate is how much there is to be seen in remote parts of Lombardy and Venetia, and how many more works of art there are in Northern Italy than are yet known to the hurrying traveller. They surround him at Como, on Lake Maggiore, at Savona on the Riviera, nay, even at so well known a place as Taggia, near San Remo. I recently came on some paintings in a small Dominican Church there, several of the Florentine and one of the Venetian school, which are, I believe, wholly unknown. I

intended to go back again and make a careful examination of them, but the following day was that on which the Riviera earthquake took place, which upset my plans, and a good many other things as well. I shall, however, I hope, be able to carefully investigate them in the course of a few weeks.

I have had many pleasant days and some painful experiences wandering in search of frescoes, and though the pleasure has largely predominated, the Sette must not think everything always goes smoothly. For instance in September, 1884, I landed at Naples from an Orient steamer, only to find that during the voyage from England the cholera had broken out in the city. It is impossible to describe what I saw; to me now it seems like some weird dream, in which deeds of heroism and scenes of abject terror are mixed up in unholy

juxtaposition; horrible death showing everywhere in the streets, while one of the loveliest landscapes in the world was hourly before my eyes; intense superstition and credulity on the one side, stoical fortitude on the other. It was a time impossible to forget, but not altogether pleasant to recall. It is better described, I think, in "Letters from a Mourning City," by Axel Menthe, than in any other account I have seen; he gives only too truly the pathetic and touching recital of what went on in the plague-stricken city.

But like everything else in this world, it had its ludicrous aspect. For instance, hotel proprietors were enjoined to watch their guests, and to see that the offices of nature were not performed with suspicious frequency. There were not many of us guests, and the proprietors did a good deal of watching. I would remind the

Sette that after a sea voyage of nine days there is frequently a reaction, and I have known more pleasant times than dodging that hotel proprietor and his minions along a dark passage without a candle at the dead of night, after having suffered agonies for some hours; but that was better than being haled away to a cholera hospital, as might have been my fate had I been detected.

* * * *

Tears and laughter, brilliant sunshine and deepest shadow, careless gaiety and profound grief, represent the impressions left on the traveller through the smaller Italian towns. Nature seems to vie with the inhabitants in touching all the varying chords of the human heart; sometimes harmonies, sometimes discords prevail. Throughout the land there is no thought of the

past and but little for the morrow; and all the time the remains of mediæval greatness and the thoughtful earnest strivings of the early masters look down from their life of centuries on the indifference of to-day. Many of the earlier paintings are rude and uncouth; but the traveller who tarries awhile to gaze on them is carried away by their directness and earnestness, while, when he comes to fifteenth century work, he finds combined with dignity the utmost grace, movement, and freedom.

I sometimes think it is as well that such works are neglected, for there is a great fascination in the mixture of modern life and early art which is lost in the larger towns; Baedeker and Murray are unknown, and the *sagrestano* of a church only shrugs his shoulders when the *pazzo Inglese* wishes to see the half-forgotten frescoes which adorn the walls. Too often, however, indiffe-

rence becomes actively destructive; priceless frescoes are smoked and blackened by lamps hung before a tawdry tinsel shrine or are irretrievably ruined by nails driven into the plaster for decoration for a *festa*. Neglect, damp, and decay are also slowly effacing many works, indeed, often more damage has been done in the last ten years than in the four preceding centuries. The ruthless hand of the restorer, moreover, has not been idle. In fine, those who wish to see such works as those I have imperfectly alluded to should at once face the indifferent accomodation and unfamiliar food which too often awaits the traveller in provincial Italian towns.

O. V.

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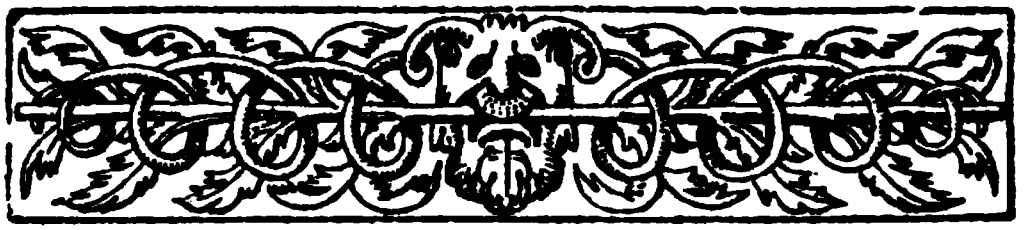

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1884. Charles Welsh, *Chapman*, Leytonstone, Essex (Vice-President, 1888).

1885. Edward Walford, M.A., *Rhymer*, 7, Hyde Park Mansions, N.W.

Supplemental Odd Volumes.

1886. Charles Holme, F.L.S., *Pilgrim* (President), The Red House, Bexley Heath, Kent (Secretary, 1887).

1886. Fredk. H. Gervis, M.R.C.S., *Apothecary*, 1, Fellows Road, Haverstock Hill, N.W.

1887. John W. Brodie-Innes, *Master of the Rolls*, Milton House, The Orchard, Bedford Park, W. (Secretary, 1888).

1887. Henry Moore, A.R.A., *Ancient Mariner*, Collingham, Maresfield Gardens, N.W.

1887. Alfred H. Littleton, *Troubador*, Westwood House, Sydenham.

1887. E. P. Loftus Brock, F.S.A., F.R.I.B.A., *Architect*, 36, Great Russell Street, W.C.

1887. James Orrock, R.I., *Connoisseur*, 48, Bedford Square, W.C.

1887. W. J. Goode, *Potter*, Tudor House, Hampstead Heath, N.W.

1888. Alfred East, R.I., *Aquarelliste*, 14, Adamson Road, Belsize Park, N.W.

1888. Walter Hamilton, F.R.G.S., F.R.H.S., *Parodist*, Ellarbee, Elms Road, Clapham Common, S.W.

1888. Douglas H. Gordon, F.G.S., *Remembrancer*, 41, Tedworth Square, S.W. (Secretary, 1889).

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1888. John Todhunter, M.D., *Bard*, Orchard Croft, The Orchard, Bedford Park, W.

1889. Francis Elgar, LL.D., F.R.S.E., *Shipwright*, The Admiralty, Whitehall, S.W.

1889. William Manning, F.R.M.S., *Seer* (Auditor), 21, Redcliffe Gardens, S.W.

1890. Silvanus P. Thompson, D.Sc., M.I.E.E., *Magnetizer*, Morland, Chislett Road, N.W.

1890. Conrad W. Cooke, M. Inst. E. E., *Jester*, The Lindens, Larkhall Rise, S.W.

1890. E. ONSLOW FORD, A.R.A., *Sculptor*, 62, Acacia Road, N.W.

1890. FRED VILLIERS, *War Correspondent*, Primrose Hill Studios, N.W.

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CHANCERY LANE.

Robert Houdin

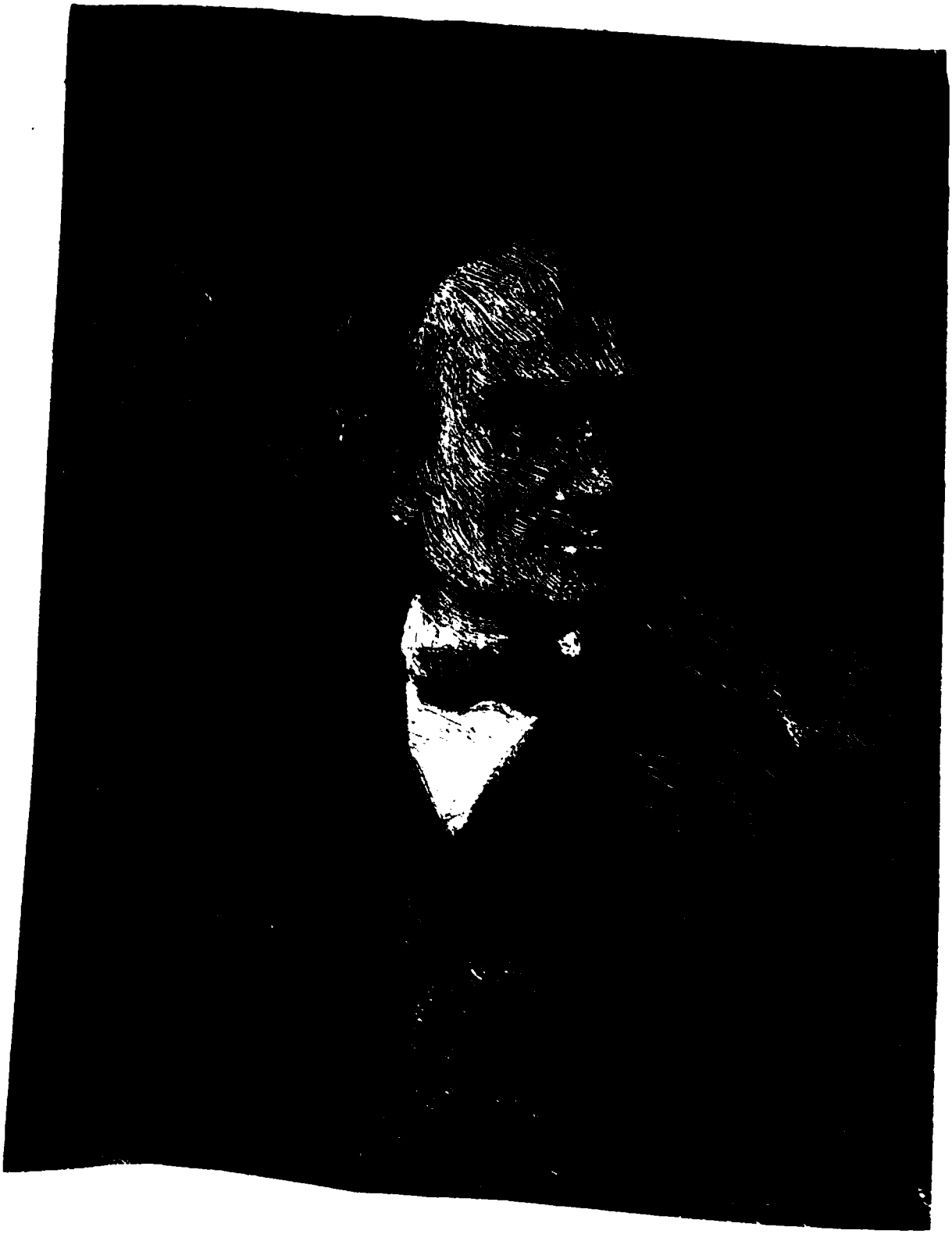
Privately Printed Opuscula.

ISSUED TO THE MEMBERS OF THE SETTE OF ODD VOLUMES.

No. XXIV.

RECOLLECTIONS OF ROBERT-HOUDIN,

CLOCKMAKER—ELECTRICIAN—CONJUROR.



RECOLLECTIONS

OF

ROBERT-HOUDIN

BY

WILLIAM MANNING,

Seer

TO THE SETTE OF ODD VOLUMES.

Delivered at a Meeting of the Sette held at Limmer's Hotel, on Friday, December 7, 1890.

IMPRINTED AT

THE CHISWICK PRESS, TOOKS COURT,

CHANCERY LANE, LONDON.

MDCCCXCI.

Dedicated

TO THE PRESIDENT

AND THE SETTE OF ODD VOLUMES.

This Edition is limited to 205 copies, and is imprinted for private circulation only.

No. 22

Presented unto

Edward Walford M.A

by

Brother Manning

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

* Reproduced from the Original Sketch kindly lent by Mdme. Veuve Emile Robert-Houdin.

TO THE EVER COURTEOUS READER.

HAVE to thank the PRESIDENT and BRETHREN for inviting me to print this ADDRESS, and I regard it as a great honour that my own little volume will take its place among the more famous ones which have preceded it.

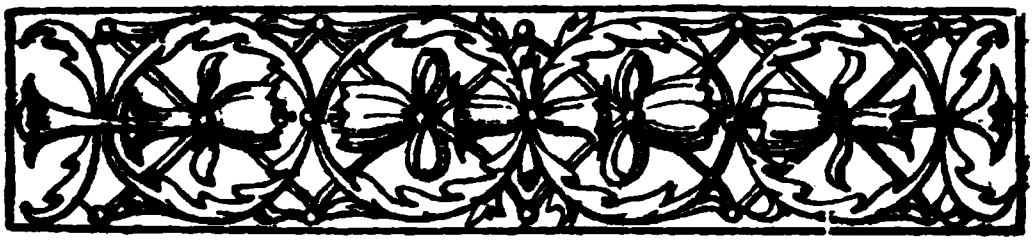
I owe special thanks to our distinguished *Art Critic* (Brother G. C. HAITÉ) for suggesting that my son, W. W. Manning, should execute some illustrations for this *opusculum*, and I shall be deemed wanting in paternal regard if I omit to thank him also for the willing help he has given me in placing before our Brethren and Guests some real Recollections of the December meeting.

WILLIAM MANNING,
Seer to the SETTE OF ODD VOLUMES.

February 6th, 1891.

ROBERT-HOUDIN,

BORN AT BLOIS, DEC. 6TH, 1805.
DIED AT BLOIS, JUNE 13TH, 1871.



RECOLLECTIONS OF
ROBERT-HOUDIN.

OUR Oddship, my Brethren of the Sette of Odd Volumes, and Guests :—

When I promised the President in obedience to his invitation to read a paper, that I would give some Recollections of Robert-Houdin, I had no idea that I had materials sufficient for a biography.

And when I thought of illustrating my reminiscences with a few experiments, most of which are personal memorials of the arch-conjuror, I

feared that an exhibition of old tricks might fall flat, or be deemed an impertinence.

I hope to surmount these two difficulties by condensing my remarks into the smallest possible space, and by craving the indulgence of Brethren and Guests for producing any experiment with which they may be familiar.

I further ask for your generous forbearance if I appear to speak unduly of myself, for I do assure you that my only aim to-night is to glorify my hero.

Well then, to begin quite at the beginning, I made the acquaintance of Robert-Houdin and his interesting family when I was a school-boy.

During his stay in London in 1849, I was an almost daily visitor at his house, and my intimacy and correspondence with him continued to nearly the last month of his life.

In those early days, I was the playfellow of

his two sons Emile and Eugène, and sometimes assisted the family in making up the freshly-cut flowers from Covent Garden into the small button-holes, which were to play their part in the evening's performance. I really must introduce you to the family circle when I first entered the magic ring at 35, Bury Street, St. James's.

That ring consisted of

Monsieur
Madame
Emile
Eugène.

These comfortable apartments had been secured by my valued friend, the late John Mitchell, whose keen sense of business had led him to make handsome overtures to the Parisian prestidigitateur, and as the French plays were then running at St. James's Theatre three nights

in the week, to fill up the other three nights with the Soirées Fantastiques of Robert-Houdin.

I remember on the first occasion of my dining with the family, that Mdme. Robert-Houdin, whose knowledge of the English language was extremely limited, but whose solicitude for her guest was unbounded, made an attempt to draw me out upon the subject of a dish, which she hoped might be congenial to my taste. At that time she was mistress of about four sentences in English, which she repeated with the precision (I speak it with all respect) of the parrot. To the intense amusement of her husband she looked inquiringly in my face, and said with great deliberation and excellent pronunciation "I love you!" She was a very pretty woman, and I appreciated that mark of her favour; but I was a very small boy, and scarcely understood the merriment of Monsieur, when

roaring with laughter, he explained to me that she didn't really love me, but had employed one of her four sentences, and that what she really meant to ask was,—"Do you like it?" No ill-feeling arose from this mistake, and as I was not only small but unsophisticated, my visits to this happy family were not interrupted by the incident.

It was on this occasion that I saw the first drawing-room trick, as played by the master-hand, and if space allowed I would exhibit it to you. He would take a handkerchief thus: and thus: making knots and failing to make them, to the bewilderment of the spectator; and though as you perceive it is still perfectly empty, I take it up, and by simply shaking it thus, I fortunately am enabled to produce this shower of goodies, which I have much pleasure in sending round for the gratification of the Odd Councillors.

If your Oddship, always so particular on the subject of language, but always so forgiving to an erring Brother, would permit me to mutilate a famous proverb, and blend three tongues into one, I would say of this shower of sweetmeats :—

"DE MORTUIS NIL nicey *bon-bons!*"

With regard to the sons, Emile and Eugène, I was only too ready to be the friend and *confrère* of two individuals, who at that time were playing their respective parts in exciting the wonder and admiration of the London public at St. James's Theatre.

Emile, the elder of the two sons, assisted his father on the stage with a manner and quickness peculiarly French. He took part in the wonderful vanishing trick, in which he was placed upon a table on the stage, and being covered with a

huge extinguisher, his father, on firing a pistol at the table overthrew the extinguisher, while in a few seconds, another pistol-shot from an unoccupied box at the back of the theatre attracted

all eyes, when was seen the form of the boy Emile, bowing to the audience.

Emile also took part in the performance of the Inexhaustible Bottle trick, which at that time produced a great disturbance in the public mind,

but which, as you will see by my model is very simple, its action being pneumatic.

In addition to the bottle itself from which a hundred glasses of liqueur were handed to his clamouring audience, I may tell you confidentially that the glasses were infinitesimally small, and for noyeau or other liqueurs which are white, many of those glasses were already properly and fully charged, and the filling was sheer make-believe on the part of the conjuror.

This will be a convenient opportunity for saying that in later years, and after his father retired from a profession for which Emile had no real love, the latter became a watchmaker in the house of M. Bréguet, where he greatly distinguished himself as a workman of the first rank, and, on his marriage to one of the most charming of women, was established as a watch and chronometer maker in Paris, turning out instruments of

precision of the very first order. He was afterwards induced to take up the old theatre, where his father had made so much fame and so much money, and he held this property until his death, which occurred after a few days' illness in 1883.

He was a man full of good nature and *bonhomie*, and his name will ever be associated with that of his father as his great helpmate in that master-piece of modern magic with which most of you are familiar from the frequent publication of its details, "Second Sight," in which performance with bandaged eyes, he gave the audience, with unfailing accuracy, the name and full description of any article which his father might take from the hand of a visitor.*

* EMILE ROBERT-HOUDIN published a Treatise on Clock and Watch-making, to which his father wrote the following preface:—

"ON m'a souvent demandé pourquoi mon fils, au lieu

Eugène was the younger son, and appeared at St. James's Theatre in the trick known as the "Suspension by Ether," the latter drug being then only recently in vogue as an anæsthetic.

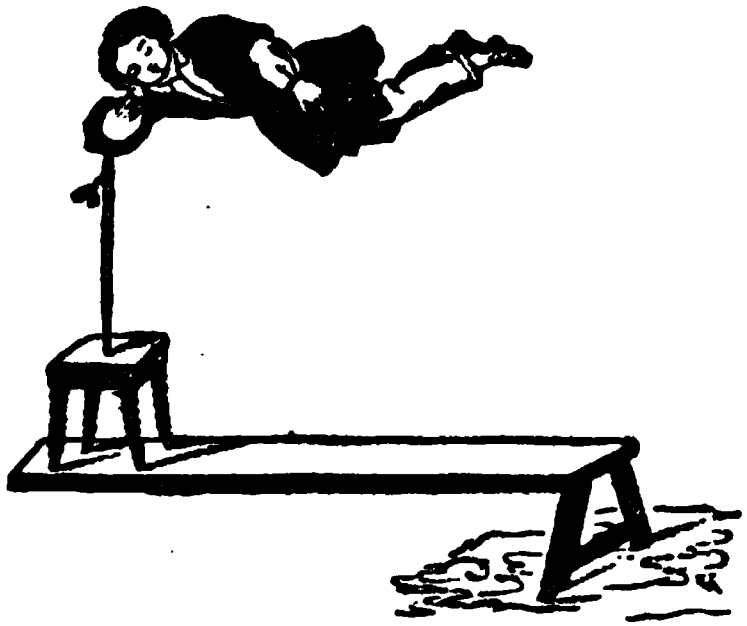
---

de suivre la carrière que je lui avais ouverte dans la prestidigitation, avait préféré se livrer à l'étude de l'horlogerie. Ce que j'ai répondu dans cette circonstance peut avoir un certain à-propos en tête de cette brochure.

"Si l'on admet les vocations héréditaires, c'est bien le cas d'en faire ici la juste application : le bisaïeul maternel de mon fils, Nicolas Houdin, était, au siècle dernier, un horloger d'un grand mérite. J-F. Houdin, son fils, a conquis, on le sait, une des premières places parmi les horlogers les plus distingués de notre époque. Certaine réserve que l'on comprendra ne me permet pas de faire avec autant d'abandon l'éloge de mon père : je me contenterai de dire que c'était un horloger très adroit et très ingénieux. Quant à moi, avant de me livrer aux travaux prestigieux dont le mécanisme était la base, je me suis occupé, longtemps, d'horlogerie de précision et, dois-je le dire, j'y ai obtenu quelques succès."

"Avec une telle généalogie, peut-on ne pas être préde-

Houdin led his handsome boy by the hand to the footlights to make the most mechanical of



bows to his audience. The two slowly retired backwards, when the father fixed an upright

stiné à l'horlogerie? Aussi mon fils, entraîné par une vocation irrésistible, s'est-il livré sans réserve à cet art qu'ont illustré les Berthoud, les Bréguet; et c'est près du dernier de ces deux célèbres maîtres qu'il a connu les éléments de la profession de ses ancêtres.

"ROBERT-HOUDIN."

rod under each arm of the son, who had ascended three steps for the purpose of raising himself from the stage. The father then expatiated gravely upon the marvels of ether, and pretending to administer it to the youth, a simulated slumber followed, and the steps being suddenly removed, the boy remained supported by the two rods only, his body retaining its vertical position, the feet eighteen inches from the stage. Houdin then very carefully raised the body to the horizontal line without disturbing the slumber of the boy, and to the terror of many a spectator, the father suddenly kicked away rod number two, leaving Eugène's outstretched body apparently without a support, his right elbow only just in contact with rod number one. My illustration represents a further development of the experiment which appeared to defy the laws of nature. This was

always the final trick of a performance, and when the curtain fell, and was raised again in obedience to the recall, father and son came walking most gravely forward, and the effect of this slow movement was to make half the world believe that the boy was not flesh and blood at all, but a marvellous automaton!

This same Eugène played an important part in his country's history; for he became a much-loved officer in the 1st Zouaves, taking the rank of Captain in that regiment in 1866.

A most interesting letter, the last I received from his father, narrates his death so graphically, that I insert it further on in this discourse.

This may be a convenient moment to show you one or two of the smaller souvenirs of my hero, and, as I alluded to flower-cutting, perhaps this box, a well-used one at the theatre in the Palais Royal, as also at St. James's Theatre in

King Street, may now be presented for your inspection.

Wait a moment! I had intended that it should have contained natural instead of the artificial flowers with which you see it is crammed. You will pardon the error, for these are worthless as gifts their perfume being lost. I empty them upon my desk, and close the box tightly thus,—and open it instantly thus; and I invite you to observe that it is packed full to overflowing with real roses and sweetly-scented violets to which you are truly welcome. Stay!

"There's rosemary, that's for remembrance!"

—or rather for the *Remembrancer*, in acknowledgment of his gracious gift of to-night,* and forget-me-nots for all!

* "Neglected Frescoes in Northern Italy," O.V. Opuscula No. XXIII. by Brother Douglas H. Gordon.

Those among my audience who have read the Memoirs of Robert-Houdin* may remember that the accidental purchase of the wrong book handed to him by an oblivious bookseller (the London bookseller is never oblivious) who gave the young boy a treatise on magic, when he was paying for one on botany,—this accident, I say, turned the whole current of his mind in the direction of trick-making, his first effort being devoted to the manufacture of toys in endless variety.

He gave me one which at that time could be purchased from the Paris toy-makers, and which I will endeavour to show to you. It is in good preservation though it has been in my possession since 1849, religiously taken care of as you perceive, and its delicate limbs have remained

* Chapman and Hall, London, 1859.

unbroken for it was exhibited to my children on state occasions only. As I take it from its little box, by a reversal of the lid I build up a platform with three stages, and placing my old friend on the top of the highest platform I gently blow in his face, and as you see he turns somersault after somersault until he reaches my desk, when he obliges us with a final fling expressive of indignation that there are no more steps left! I pass this fantastic acrobat round. It appears to be of Eastern descent. Your Oddship will observe that the dress is scanty, but picturesque, but as your experience is vast in these matters you will perhaps determine the nationality, with further particulars for the benefit of inquisitive Brethren?

Another of his gifts and of his inventions also lies at my hand, A Negro's Head, a gentleman from Darkest Africa, which as you see will not

permit itself to be severed from its body by my knife. How useful such a head would have been to many a notability in our own dear history; for as your Oddship perceives, this head will not come off, cut which way I please.

> No knife can cut this throat in twain,
> No juggler rend this jug'lar vein!

I much regret that I have no illustration for this popular person, but during the month at my disposal the days were as dark as the nights and the backgrounds were too black for his sable skin.

During his stay in London, Robert-Houdin enjoyed a long series of triumphs, and was the sensation of the season, producing novelty after novelty. He made a tour of the provinces, and visited Ireland and Scotland before his final return to London, and with a daring quite cha-

racteristic of his determination to surmount difficulties he addressed all his country audiences in English, producing many an encouraging cheer and roar of laughter by some of his mistakes in the choice of words.

On his provincial tour, he paid me a visit at my School in Birmingham, and I must here give you an example of his kindness, and manner of displaying it.

Never can I forget a certain Sunday during my friend's stay in Birmingham. He was then performing at Dee's Hotel, and had comfortable quarters in the immediate neighbourhood. After dinner many friends dropped in, and after a general conversation, it was determined to play at cards, and among other guests, I was invited to sit at the round table.

I had been brought up as a strict observer of the Sabbath, and I took my seat with a sort of

holy dread! Scarcely were the cards dealt out, and while I was still in the throes of horror at my new position, when the sound of evening bells from the neighbouring Church of St. Philip added to my feelings of remorse that I should be engaged on such unholy pastime. "Bells! bells! bells! bells!" The game in which I was engaged, and the language of my host and his friends were alike foreign to me.

In addition to the remonstrating clanging of the deep-toned bells, I was also conscious of getting deeper into the mental mire by the adverse run of luck. "Bells! bells!" were ringing in my ears, and "Losing! losing!" was making itself audible in the innermost recesses of my heart. My counters at every moment were getting sensibly fewer, and, in addition to feeling that I had unexpectedly, and without malice prepense, dived into the vortex of dissipa-

tion, I was conscious of being unable to meet my engagements when should come the moment for final settlement, as we were playing for money, and I had nothing in my schoolboy pockets but the proverbial knife and piece of string!

The suspense was more awful than I can describe. The end came, all too soon. Ill luck pursued me with a continuity that was relentless, and when my despair was at its greatest, and my exchequer at its lowest, the game suddenly terminated, and I was all but bankrupt in counters, and absolutely so in pocket! My host and friend was my *vis-à-vis*, and probably had observed my distress, for, as if by very magic, with a face full of fun, he took a handful of his winnings, and stretching across the table placed a good pile of pearl fishes before me, which exactly enabled me to pay twenty shillings in the pound, and to rise from my seat blessed with

those finest of human emotions—"Peace with Honour!"

After his return to Paris, a few years enabled him to amass a handsome fortune, and seek retirement in his native town of Blois. But even there he was ever at work. Among many wonders he made a watch with a pedometer movement which was always winding itself up: that is to say, when the wearer moved about by day, it received sufficient winding impetus to go on through the night: so long as the owner walked up, the watch would never run down.

In his later years he devoted himself to the subtler sciences, and read many original articles before the learned societies, copies of which I possess. He was a master of the science of Optics, and he presented me with an Ophthalmoscope which he invented for the examination of his own retina!

AUTOMATA.

I have by me a list of the chief of his automata, most of which I have seen, but which it is tantalizing to describe as I cannot show them. The greater number were made during those early struggles to which so many famous men have been born. (Indeed, it occurs to me that, without them, one may scarcely hope to become great!)

I take at random, merely to mention them:—

The Chinese Juggler,

Auriol and Débureau,

The Mysterious Orange Tree,

A Tumbler who performed daring tricks upon the Trapèze,

The Pastry Cook who distributed cakes and wine to the spectators,

The Writing Automaton.

Just a word about his Writing Automaton, perhaps the most marvellous of his works,

which answered questions proposed by spectators, and even drew elegant emblematic designs in reply to some questions.

The Artist had many disappointments in procuring a suitable head for his new automaton, for the sculptor had produced him an admirable model for the body of his figure, but, being a maker of saints, had put rather too much sanctity into the face to give satisfaction. So after many fruitless efforts to obtain what he required, Houdin set to work for himself, and, with a ball of modelling wax and a looking-glass, actually succeeded after many disappointments in making an excellent model of his own good face!

Houdin showed this, his first marvel of mechanism to one of his servants, and used to tell the tale again and again, that the man was highly complimentary, stating that he, too, knew something of mechanics, as he always had to grease the vane on the church steeple!

He chose a residence in the country for the

construction of his next great triumph, a nightingale, whose delicate pipings were reproduced with marvellous fidelity, and whose beak opened and closed in time with the notes it was producing, and whose body leapt from branch to branch of the trees by which it was surrounded.

My space is so limited or I should have shown you with what dexterity he produced innumerable plumes from a small square of velvet, similar to this that I hold before you. As I have no plumes I cannot produce them. He would throw the velvet thus, across his shoulder, and, instantly withdrawing his hand, would hold aloft a large bowl of gold fish, as, happily, I am able to do now!

Bowl, fish, and water, all real.

Look at this illustration of his MYSTERIOUS CLOCK. Nothing could be simpler in appearance, yet few problems are more difficult of solution. The small base is surmounted by glass, transparent as you see. The face is of glass also, and equally transparent with the cylinders which support it. The dial has but one hand. There is no connection but glass between base and dial, and yet the clock is a perfect time-keeper!

Do you not agree with me that the man who conceived this masterpiece of deception must have had an imagination of no common order, and to have executed it with his own hands in a manner which defied detection, must have had brains almost at his fingers' ends? In the preceding paragraph, I have given you *one letter*, which may be a key to the clock-mystery! DO NOT GIVE IT UP!

GHOST ILLUSION, ETC.

In the midst of the pleasures of his retirement he was ever taking the liveliest interest, not only in his own particular inventions, but in the tricks, illusions, and deceptions, which were being produced in England, and I had many communications with him on these subjects, furnishing him with drawings or models, many of which he reproduced with startling improvements and additions, in his grounds at St. Gervais. The Ghost Illusion was a secret well kept by the people at the Polytechnic, as well as the famous Sphinx by Stodare at the Egyptian Hall; but I give you my word that my friend received full particulars at the earliest moment possible, and I carried my regard to this extent, that I not only investigated the so-called supernatural powers of the child known as the Infant Magnet, but, on a public stage, during the perfor-

mance of certain mysterious phenomena by a young lady who shall be nameless, I consented to be locked up in a dark cabinet with that interesting maiden, whose toilette was superb.

I was searching for Truth in the interests of Science. I was attached to that young person with tapes. I remember on my return home rather late to our apartments at W———, SOMEONE said to me:—

"Where have *you* been?"

I dissembled and said, "N—owhere."

She said, "But what is this white stuff upon your sleeve?"

Again I dissembled and said:—

"Oh! it rubs off!"

Said she, "I believe it is powder!"

"Gunpowder?" said I.

"*Is gunpowder white?*" said she. (She had never been sarcastic before!)

So I had to make a clean breast of it, and told her exactly what I have told you.

I never betray Cabinet secrets, but my report to my correspondent was that the phenomena which had taken place in the dark cabinet, bells, tambourines, and all, were accounted for by natural laws, and that the so-called spiritualist was no spirit at all!

Electricity, etc.

Robert-Houdin's employment of electricity not only as a moving power for the performance of his illusions, but for domestic purposes was long in advance of his time.

The electric-bell, so common to us now, was in every-day use *for years* in his own house, before its value was recognized by the public.

When he fitted up his first call-bell, which he had done without the knowledge of his family,

he fixed the stud beneath his table, that he might press it with his foot; and calling his children, he said, "Here is a new trick. When I put my finger in this tumbler of water, Adèle will enter the room!"

And so it happened, for Adèle was in the secret, and so on with his other servants.

As I have said, electricity was a force of highest value to him, and was an unknown factor among his professional brethren. His inventions of mysteriously-moving clocks are numberless, and I lack time to describe them, but his application of electro-magnetism, long after he had quitted public life demands a brief notice.

His dwelling-house in his retirement at St. Gervais near Blois stood about a quarter of a mile from the entrance-gate, and when the traveller reached it, and used the knocker, gently or forcibly, an immediate loud ringing

became audible in the house though so far away, which continued and would not cease its warning sound, until a servant pressed a stud placed in the hall, which immediately unlocked the gate and an enamelled plate appeared on it, bidding the visitor "Walk in."

This gate, in opening and closing (the latter being done by the aid of a spring) set in motion at different angles of such opening and closing, a bell which rung in a particular manner, and the peculiar and quickly-ceasing sound of that bell indicated with a little observation, whether the visitors were one or several in number, or a friend of the family, or callers for the first time, or a tramp.

His letter-box too at the gate, was a very ingenious contrivance. It closed by a small flap, which, directly the postman opened, set in motion an electric-bell at the Priory. The

postman had orders to put in first all newspapers and circulars, so as not to create unfounded expectations: after which he put in letters, one by one, so that in the house, if not inclined for early rising, he could, even in bed, reckon up the different items of the morning post-bag.

Then, to save the trouble of posting his letters in the village post-office (for Robert-Houdin wrote all his correspondence at night) by turning an apparatus called a commutator, the working of the signals was reversed, and the next morning the postman on putting his parcel in the box, instead of causing a ring in the house, was warned by the sound of a bell close beside him, to go up to the house and fetch some letters; and he announced himself accordingly.

He had a favourite horse, named Fanny, for

whom he entertained great affection, and christened her "the friend of the family."

She was of gentle disposition, and was growing old in his service; so he was anxious to allow her every indulgence, especially punctuality at meals, and full allowance of fodder.

Such being the case, it was a matter of great surprise that Fanny grew daily thinner and thinner, till it was discovered that her groom had a great fancy for the art formerly practised by her master, and converted her hay into five-franc pieces! So Robert-Houdin dismissed the groom, secured a more honest lad, but to provide against further contingencies and neglect of duty, he had a clock placed in his study, which with the aid of an electrical conducting wire, worked a food supply to the stable, a distance of fifty yards from the house. The distributing apparatus was a square funnel-shaped

box, which discharged the provender in prearranged quantities. No one could steal the oats from the horse after they had fallen, as the electric trigger could not act unless the stable door were locked. The lock was outside, and if anyone entered before the horse had finished eating its oats, a bell would immediately ring in the house.

This same clock in his study also transmitted the time to two large clock faces, placed one on the front of the house, the other on the gardener's lodge, the former for the benefit of the villagers.

In his bell-tower he had a clockwork arrangement of sufficient power to lift the hammer at the proper moment. The daily winding of the clock was performed automatically by communication with a swing door in his kitchen, and the winding up apparatus of the clock in the clock-

tower was so arranged, that the servants, in passing backwards and forwards on their domestic duties, unconsciously wound up the striking movement of the clock.

He had a marvellous contrivance for arousing his servants, and compelling them to get up in the morning. The alarum sounded, and continued ringing until they got out of bed to press a stud at the furthest end of rooms.

In addition to the foregoing, when for any reason he wanted to advance or retard the hour of a meal, by his mode of regulating the clock in the tower, he could, by secretly pressing a certain electric button in his study, put forward or backward all the clocks as well as striking apparatus. It mystified the cook, and he had gained his purpose without losing his character for punctuality at meals.

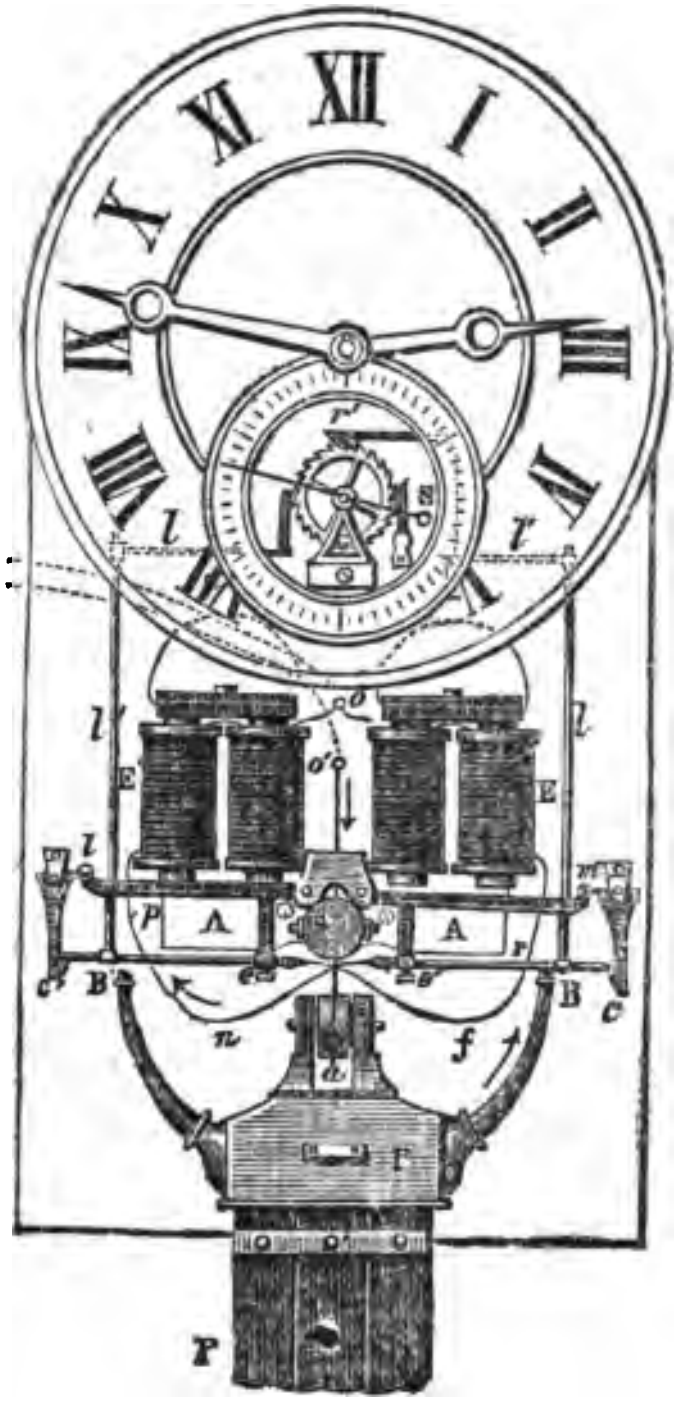
For a fuller account of these wonders see

Robert-Houdin's own description in "Le Prieuré" and "Les Secrets de la Magie."

"Robert-Houdin's electric clock is here represented. The suspending spring of the pendulum *P* is in communication at *o'* with the positive pole of the battery. It is provided with two curved arms, *B* and *B'*, which alternately come into contact with two spring bands, and so close the circuit, first with the electro-magnet *E*, and then with the electro-magnet *E'*. Suppose the oscillation of the pendulum begins on the right side of the figure, and the contact is then made by the arm *B*. The current following the wires in the direction marked by the arrows passes by *E'*; the left branch of the armature *AA'*, being attracted, raises the spring which acts by means of the rods *t'*, *l*, and a catch on a

ratchet-wheel, and makes it advance one tooth. The same motion raises the little mass *l*, and draws up the catch *c'* below the spring, which is thus stopped, while the right-hand spring is dis-engaged from the catch *c*, and is enabled to act by its weight during the retrograde motion of the pendulum. Then the contact ceases, the current is interrupted, the left-hand armature ceases to be attracted, the rod *t'* is lowered, and drives the upper corresponding catch over the next tooth of the ratchet-wheel.

The motion of the bob towards the left brings *B'* into contact with the left-hand spring. The current circulates through the electro-magnet *E'*, the armature on the right is attracted, and the same motions which we have just described take place on the opposite side, so that it is now the left-hand spring which, when dis-engaged, acts by its elasticity and its weight on the arm *B'* of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the pendulum, and the catch *r'* is drawn in its turn over one tooth of the ratchet-wheel. Two counterpoises, *e e'*, which can be set at different distances on the spring bands, are the means of regulating the action of these springs, and, consequently, the motion of the pendulum itself." *

His grounds, very extensive and always maintained in strictest order, were so full of marvellous arrangements that in the country round he had the reputation of possessing supernatural powers, which in the days of the Scotch witches recently spoken of before this Brotherhood, might have cost him a good cremation! But during the Franco-Prussian war, and at the period when a descent upon Blois was by no means impossible,

* "The Applications of Physical Forces," by Amédée Guillemin. Translated from the French by Mrs. Norman Lockyer. London, Macmillan and Co., 1877.

he was entrusted with every description of property by his confiding neighbours and friends; and he constructed in an adjacent wood a cave, unknown to all the world, where he secreted these valuables until the crisis was happily at an end.

It was at about this period that he sustained the severest loss that had ever overtaken him, by the death of his youngest son, Captain Eugène Robert-Houdin. His letter announcing that event may be of interest, so I reproduce it *verbatim*.

"Saint Gervais, près Blois, le 11 7bre 1870

Cher Monsieur,

Je vous remercie bien, vous et votre famille, des marques de sympathie que vous m'avez adressées au sujet du malheur qui m'a frappé.

Depuis la mort de mon pauvre enfant, je suis

malade, découragé et tout absorbé par ma douleur; c'est ce qui vous explique le retard que j'ai mis à vous répondre.

Vous pourrez, mon cher ami, juger de l'étendue de mes regrets par les détails que je vais vous donner: Mon fils avait 33 ans, il était capitaine depuis 1866: il avait donc quatre ans de ce grade; il faisait partie du 1er Zouaves et il était cité comme un des braves parmi ce brave corps. Vous allez en juger par le récit suivant que j'extrais d'un article du *Figaro* du 3 7bre, sous le titre de *Un épisode de Reichshoffen extrait d'une lettre particulière.* Cette lettre revient sans doute d'un soldat de la compagnie de mon fils; elle est signée d'un ×.

Je passe les détails navrants qui ont précédé cette malheureuse retraite . . . . . .

. . . . . "La ligne avait reçu l'ordre de rompre et nous étions vaincus, 35,000 contre

140,000 ! On fit monter de nouveau ma compagnie (1er Zouaves) sur le champ de bataille, et l'on nous déploya en tirailleurs ; seuls, sans artillerie, nous devions soutenir la retraite.

" Ici commence un épisode de Waterloo.

" Sur l'ordre du capitaine Robert-Houdin le lieutenant Girard s'avance avec deux hommes pour reconnaître l'ennemi. Il fait trois pas et tombe en disant 'n'abandonnez pas le *Coucou*' expression familière par laquelle nous désignons le drapeau. Nous l'emportons et le Capitaine crie Feu !

" L'ordre de rétrograder nous arrive, mais nous ne l'entendons pas et continuons à nous battre contre un mur de feu qui éclaircit nos rangs. Bientôt le capitaine tombe à son tour en me disant : " Dites leur . . . . . que je tombe le dernier en faisant face à l'ennemi."

. . . . . .

Une balle lui avait traversé la poitrine. Transporté à l'ambulance de Reichshoffen, il y mourut quatre jours après, des suites de sa blessure.

Eh bien! mon cher Manning, croiriez-vous que ce brave fils, au moment même où il venait d'être frappé mortellement, eut l'héroïque courage, au milieu de la mitraille de tirer de sa poche une carte et un crayon et d'écrire au dos ces mots : cher père, *je suis blessé; mais rassure-toi; c'est un bobo.** Sa signature n'a pu être achevée. La carte et l'envellope qui la contenait sont maculées de son sang. Cette précieuse relique m'a été envoyée de Reichshoffen après la mort de mon fils.

En voilà bien long, cher monsieur, sur ce

* Expression qui désigne en français le moindre des maux que l'on puisse souffrir.

sujet. Mais j'ai pensé que ces détails vous intéresseraient.

Veuillez me croire toujours,

Votre bien dévoué,

ROBERT-HOUDIN."

Once more I feel that I must throw myself on your clemency as I am about to show two articles of quite recent construction, and which, although exciting the admiration of all lovers of the marvellous, are in themselves mere toys compared with the minute and elaborate handiwork of the greatest of modern mechanicians. Two apologies would seem superfluous on the same subject, but I forgot to state that, when debating with myself whether I should produce any experiments at all in illustration of my discourse, the idea possessed me that there are

three sorts of men (there are many other sorts, of course), of whom I had to think in deciding this problem;

1. The men who know nothing. (Very few!)

2. The men who know something. (Happily numerous!)

3. The men who think they know everything. (None present to-night!)

Well, after a not angry discussion with myself, I determined that if peradventure there were only ten innocent ones among us to-night (I know five among the Brethren, myself being one), *for the sake of those ten* I would show my manifestations and demonstrations, and risk the consequences!

So here is a daintily modelled Guitar-Player. I exhibit this moving figure in order to make a comparison which will not be odious exactly, but which may enable me to explain the won-

derful difference between the minute work of my friend (whose sole aim was to imitate most closely the works of nature) and the limited movements of my Ethiopian Serenader now playing before you. Houdin's Guitar-Player not only moved its head eyes and body in keeping with the air it was playing, but each of the tiny fingers touched the strings at the identical moment that the notes sounded from the concealed musical-box at the base of the automaton.

My second modern figure I exhibit as it is an excellent example of Houdin's Débureau, a French clown, who not only came out of his own box and went through many performances but played an air on a small whistle placed in his mouth, and finally smoked a pipe!

With his Oddship's kind permission, my French clown will not only survey this distinguished assembly through his glasses, but will,

as you see, puff his cigarette after the most approved fashion, and eject his long wreaths and rings of perfumed smoke across the room till—so to speak—all is blue!

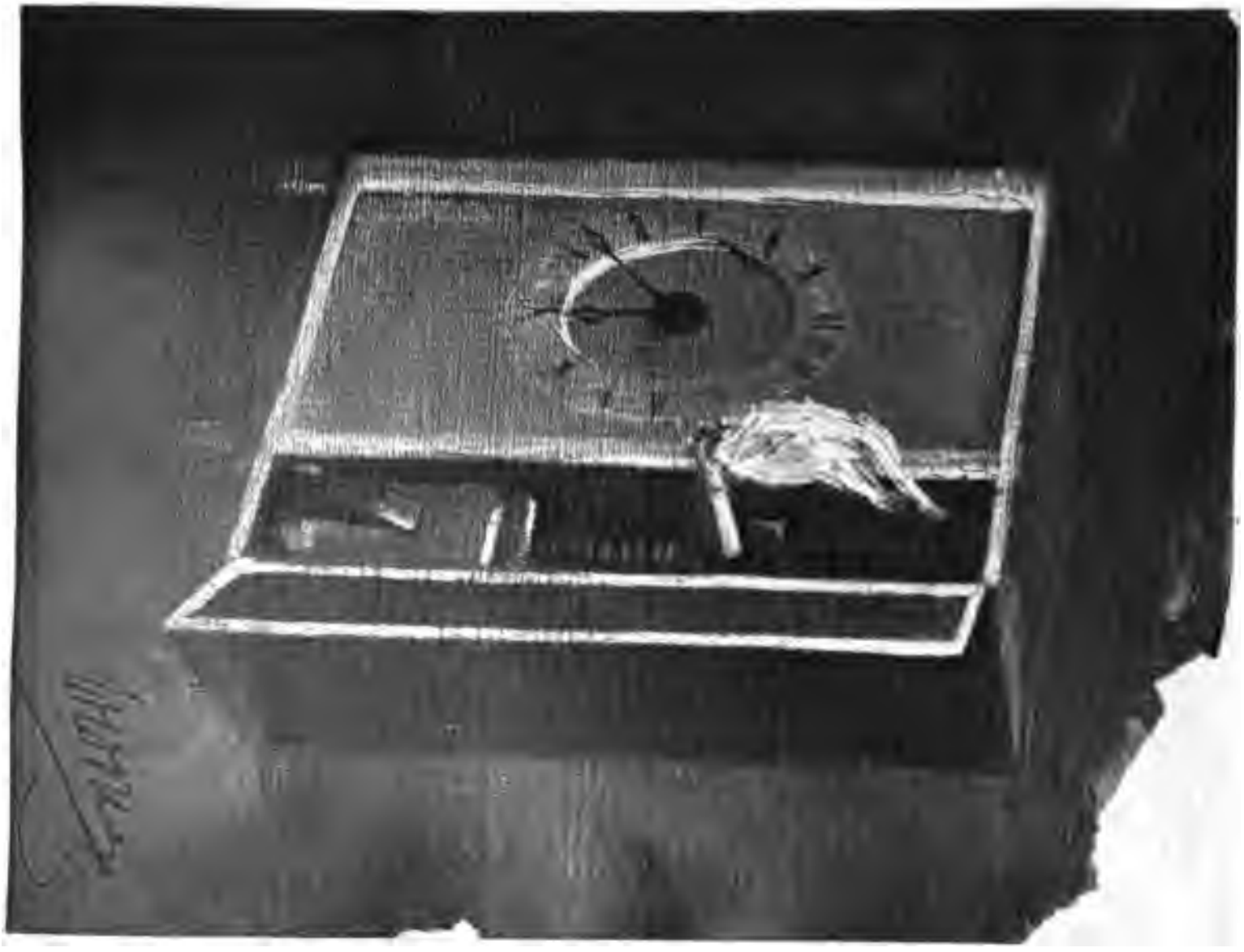
Robert-Houdin's untiring industry manifested itself at an early age, but the feat that established his indomitable will in overcoming difficulties, which, to most enthusiasts would have appeared insuperable, was the successful imitation, bit by bit, of a most delicate piece of mechanism, consisting of a musical snuff-box, (sent to his father for repair) from whose top a tiny bird sprang forth, singing its one sweet song, and then retreating to its hidden nest. This success, accomplished out of his regular business hours, gave him courage for further attempts of a still more

ambitious nature, and during his brilliant career he was the inventor of numberless marvels of creative skill; all of them mysterious, all of them beautiful, and some of them absolutely poetic!

My last souvenir consists of this clock, one of his earliest inventions, which brought his name as a watchmaker into prominent notice, and which was commercially a great success. He was very anxious to be an early riser, but with the best resolutions he wanted, (like other well meaning people we might mention) a good deal of awaking, and notwithstanding his loudest alarum, he was prone to turn round on the other side and go to sleep again, especially in dark weather. So this example of his own handiwork helped to cure him of his weakness, *by supplying him with a lighted match*, and as the last tinklings of the alarum were dying away,

the match was staring him in the face, he lighted his candle by it, got up, and went to his workshop or his study. You will perceive that at the proper moment the match which had been previously placed in its receptacle horizontally, is rapidly drawn through two pieces of rough glass-paper, is lighted by the friction, jumps up to the vertical position, and insists upon being used for lighting the neighbouring candle!

I intentionally omit, as being too long for this address, his adventures in Algeria, although they are intensely interesting, and I content myself by saying that in 1856, he accepted an engagement from the French government to put an end to the belief among the Arabs in the miraculous power of their wizards and marabouts, whom he met on their own grounds, fought with their own weapons, and demonstrated under the public eye, that he was more than a match for the best



of them, though denying that he possessed any supernatural gift whatever!

And now I feel that my task is approaching completion—a pleasant task—but which I must not for your sakes make unduly long. I have not troubled you with many dates or facts with regard to birth or history of my hero, one of the most remarkable artists of his time.

Had he lived till to-morrow, he would have been 85 years of age, and heaven only knows what new marvels of invention he would have given to the world!

I have endeavoured, very rapidly, to give a sketch of my good friend, who was one of the most interesting of men. He had an individuality peculiarly his own. He had a geniality

of manner positively magnetic, and exerting its influence upon all who knew him.

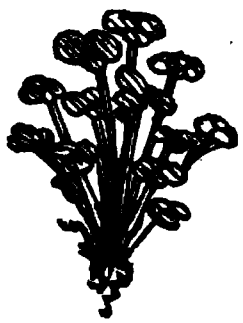
His figure upon the stage was never to be forgotten. His animation, his gesture, his ready wit, his quick transitions from fun to serious earnest, would have fitted him for the highest forms of acting—COMEDY and TRAGEDY would both have claimed him as their own!

He never played twice alike, and never flagged for a moment; but an interruption from a member of his audience invariably drew forth some brilliant but good-natured repartee, which was crushing, for he was a fellow of infinite jest! He was no common entertainer surrounded with showy stage properties, for as Carlyle said of Dickens's readings, "his *face* was the scenery!"

But, alas! the time came when the final trick was played, and the final bow was made, and

the inevitable curtain came rolling down, and for ever shut out the brilliant conjuror from a wondering and mystery-loving world.

The dead send no ambassadors to speak for them; but the illustrious dead leave disciples behind to tell again the story and the glory of their lives. So to-night, as his humble disciple and reverent admirer, I offer to my Brother Odd Volumes this tribute to the memory and the genius of ROBERT-HOUDIN.



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O. V.

A

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"Books that can be held in the hand, and carried to the fireside, are the best after all."—*Samuel Johnson.*

"The writings of the wise are the only riches our posterity cannot squander."—*Charles Lamb.*

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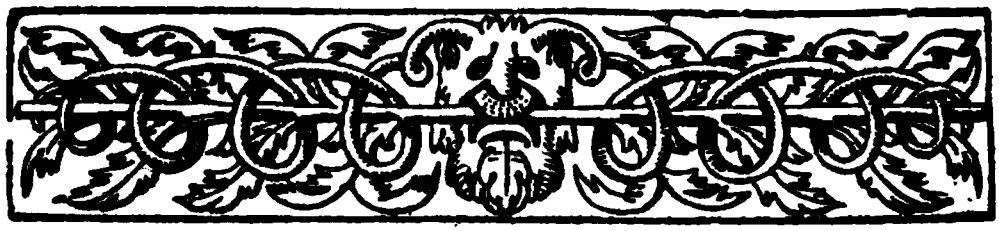

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